

U. S. Information . . Our Propaganda: What's Wrong?

By Roscoe Drummond

THE EISENHOWER Administration has put into the hands of President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk a critique of "U. S. information abroad" which breaks new ground.

It represents a hard look at what we have been doing during all the years of the cold war. It is candidly non-partisan in recognizing that much the U. S. has been doing—including the Eisenhower years—has been inept, ill-conceived, and inadequate.

The "task force," which completed its study on the eve of Mr. Kennedy's inauguration, devoted nine months to examining what has gone well, and what has gone badly. Some of its findings have been made public; many remain classified but, of course, available to the new administration. Its chairman was Mansfield D. Sprague, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs.

He ran who directed its intensive studies, which provided the foundation for much of its report, was Walter Nielsen, Associate Director of Information in Western Europe for the Marshall Plan for a number of years. It was also known to Allen Dulles, the State Department's top diplomat, who knew the task force was a new thing.

It was not detached in its approach. But it does not tread on the toes of either the Truman or Eisenhower Administrations from its central criticisms.

THE SPRAGUE report offers several valuable recommendations and a superbly heretical conclusion.

The heretical conclusion is that the U. S. information program is a failure. It is a failure because it is not a program of the U. S. Government. It is a program of the U. S. State Department.

service "to the factor of public opinion in foreign policy" and have simultaneously been excluding from the councils of policy decision everybody qualified to weigh the factor of public opinion in making such decisions.

This, the committee finds, has been the fatal weakness of the U. S. Information Program; information people are heard only after policy has

been settled and have not been meaningful partners in the making of policy.

LET ME cite one example out of my own knowledge. When a special interdepartmental committee, under the direction of a high official of the State Department, was set up last spring to plan for the Summit Conference in Paris and when all the advance preparations, position papers, policies, and proposals were being readied, not one single public opinion specialist in State, not one single representative of the USIA was included on the committee. At the end, at the very end, only a few days before everything was settled—and that at the tardy, direct orders of Secretary Herter—was a USIA representative allowed to sit in on the discussions, not as a participant, but as a tolerated observer.

This is what the Sprague task force is talking about when it warns that if we are ever going to match Communist diplomacy with a "total diplomacy" of our own, the factor of public opinion must be taken into consideration, not after policy is decided, but in the process of formulating policy.

IT IS ONLY on this basis that, in the judgment of the Sprague committee, the United States and the U. S. information effort can begin to do battle with the Communists around the world. The real reform, for which it urgently appeals, is not primarily a bigger USIA to publicize policy, but the continuous, early, high-level participation of qualified information people in the shaping of U. S. foreign policy before publicity even begins.

It is only after this reform has taken place that the Sprague committee concludes that much good can be accomplished by "expanding the scale of the total U. S. information effort."

The Kennedy Administration will be remiss, I think, if it fails to mine the Sprague report for all its good ideas—and begins to implement them.

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